



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 1911

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 01/01/1910

This article is extracted from Statistician's Report 1911.

CHAPTER III CENSUSES OF MODERN TIMES

SECTION 3. FOREIGN COUNTRIES

A. EUROPE

1. General. The censuses of most European countries are now carried out through the agency of the local authorities, the chief executive officers of which are in many countries also officers of the Central Government (1). The work of the census is ordinarily under the control of the Minister of the Interior, or some other responsible Minister, by whom explicit instructions are issued to the Local Government officers as to their duties and functions, and as to the methods of enumeration to be adopted. By these means the work of census-taking is greatly facilitated, and in many countries the cost of the census is considerably reduced by reason of the fact that the work is carried out by the Local Government authorities without extra pay or for a small extra allowance. The work of tabulation is also in many cases carried out primarily by the local authorities for their respective districts, and the results forwarded to the central office, where the final tables are compiled.

In France, for example, the direction of the census is under the control of the Minister of the Interior, by whom instructions and notes are issued to the Prefects of the various Departments. The prefect has charge of the census in his Department, which is divided into *arrondissements*, generally under the control of sub-prefects; one or more *arrondissements* form a commune or municipality, of which the mayor is the representative, as well as being the agent of the Central Government. Similarly in Prussia the Local Government districts are Provinces, Government Districts (*Regierungsbezirke*), urban circles (*Stadtkreise*), and rural circles (*Landkreise*). Similarly in Switzerland there are cantons, districts (*Amtsbezirke*), and communes, and in Belgium, provinces, communes and *arrondissements*.

The individual "schedule (2)" has been very generally adopted on the Continent of Europe, the work of tabulation being carried out (without transcription) on the "card system (3)" by the use of these schedules. In many countries both the population *de facto* and the population *de jure* are enumerated.

2. Spain. A census is said to have been taken in the Kingdom of Aragon as early as the 14th century. In the following century an enumeration of the people of Castille was ordered by the Crown, and a report of this enumeration printed at Madrid (4). In the eighteenth century two general censuses of Spain were taken and reports thereof were published in 1787 and 1801 respectively. In later years census-taking in Spain has proceeded irregularly, the next enumeration of which there is any record being made in the year 1857. This was followed by censuses in 1860, 1877, 1887, 1897, and 1900.

3. Germany. With the exception of the enumerations said to have taken place in Spain in the 14th and 15th centuries, just referred to, the earliest development of the modern census in Europe appears to have taken place in districts which are now part of the German Empire. These early enumerations have already been referred to in the Statistician's Report (5) 1911.

In Prussia a central bureau was established in 1805, through which population reports were obtained; a yearly census was taken from 1815 until 1822 and after that year triennial censuses were taken until the year 1867. In 1843 several of the States agreed to take a synchronous census on a uniform basis and in 1852 other States entered into the agreement. The first census for the whole of the German Empire was taken in the year of its foundation, viz., in 1871 (6), and the second in 1875. Since that date the German Census has been taken quinquennially in the fifth and tenth year of each decade. An occupation census of Germany was taken in 1907.

4. Sweden. The "Table Commission", which was charged with the duty of collecting through the clergy periodical returns of population and annual returns of births, marriages, and deaths, was founded in 1748, and the superintendence of the enumerations of the people was entrusted to that body. A census was taken in 1749 (7) and was followed by seven triennial censuses during the period from 1757 to 1775, and after that by a quinquennial census until 1860, and by a decennial census from the last mentioned year up to the present time.

5. France. In France official estimates of the population were made in 1700, and again in 1784, the latter being founded on the mean annual number of births. A "census of hearths" was taken by the Duc d'Argemon in 1753 (8). A regular census was ordered in 1791, but it was not accomplished until ten years later, the delay being due to the Revolution. The second census was taken in 1806, the third in 1821, and the fourth in 1831. An estimate was prepared for the year 1816, based on the figures of the 1806 census, and the records of births and deaths which had occurred in the interval. From the year 1831 onwards a census has been taken quinquennially with the single exception that, owing to the Franco-Prussian war, the census which should have been taken in 1871 was deferred until 1872.

6. Belgium. Special provision was made for the collection of statistics in Belgium in 1831, and in 1856 a law was passed providing that a general census of the people should be taken every ten years, and indicating the method of enumeration to be adopted. In 1880 a further law was passed providing that the census should be taken decennially in the tenth year of each decade. An enumeration is made both of "*la population de fait*" and "*la population de droit*." The "*bulletin de menage*" forms the basis of the schedule, which is carried out by the Local Government authorities with the aid of "*agents recenseurs*" remunerated by the Government (9).

7. Norway. The Norwegian census was instituted as early as 1769. The second census was taken in 1801, the third in 1815, the fourth in 1825, and the fifth in 1835. It is now taken decennially in the tenth year of each decade.

8. Switzerland. The original constitution of the Swiss Federation required a census once every twenty years, but in 1860 a Federal law was passed prescribing a decennial enumeration. This law, however, does not appear to have been strictly complied with, as the census of 1880 was followed by one in 1888, and this latter by the census of 1900.

9. Italy. One of the most complete censuses of any which had up to that time been executed in Europe was that taken in Sardinia in 1838. A Bureau of Statistics was created in 1860, and the first regular census of Italy was taken in 1861, succeeded by further censuses in 1871 and 1881. A gap of twenty years then occurred, the next census being that of 1901.

10. Austria. Prior to 1851 no census of Austria had been taken, the only population returns obtainable being those connected with military conscription. The first complete census was taken in 1869, and was followed by the census of 1880. Since the latter date the census has been

taken decennially in the last year of the decade.

11. Greece. The first census of modern Greece is stated to have taken place in 1836, and to have been succeeded by annual enumerations until the year 1845. From that year onwards censuses appear to have been taken at irregular intervals, the most recent being those of 1879, 1889, 1896, and 1907.

12. Russia. Partial censuses of the population for purposes of revenue and military conscription are said to have been taken in Russia as early as the year 1700, and at irregular intervals throughout the eighteenth century, but it appears that these enumerations did not include females. More complete *revisions* were taken in 1812, 1815, 1834, 1850, and thence forward at somewhat irregular intervals. The first and only complete and regular census of the Russian Empire was taken in 1897.

13. Netherlands. The first census of the Netherlands was taken in 1829, and has been succeeded by censuses taken decennially.

B. AMERICA

1. The United States. Provision for a decennial census in the United States of America was contained in the Constitution of 1787, the first enumeration to be made "within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States". This provision was rendered necessary for the purpose of equitably allocating the representation of the States in, and their financial obligations to, the Federal Government. The first census was taken in the year 1790 under the superintendence of the marshals of the several judicial districts, the returns all being referred to the 1st August of that year, though the work of canvassing was extended over a considerable period. The first census comprised six questions as to population, distinguishing free persons, their sex and colour, and the number of free males 16 years of age and over (10). Subsequent censuses have been taken decennially, the thirteenth being taken for the 13th April, 1910. Incidentally it may be here mentioned that Elkanah Watson predicted in 1815 the population of the United States very accurately up to 1860. From that time on the prediction is increasingly in error (11)

(i.) *Scope of the Census.* Beginning with six simple questions relating to population, the amount and scope of the information secured at the census of the United States has increased to such an extent that it has become too extensive to be tabulated by hand within a reasonable period. The peculiar features by which this census has come to differ from that of other countries are probably attributable to the fact that no special power is granted under the Constitution to the Federal Government to undertake general statistical inquiries. The provision for a decennial census has, therefore, been taken advantage of to secure much statistical information which ordinarily is not connected with a census. The first such enlargement of the scope of the census was in 1810, when particulars of manufacturing establishments were collected. In 1840 inquiries respecting schools were incorporated. It was at the seventh census in 1850, however, that the main enlargement was effected. By an Act passed in that year, the census was extended to cover the name of every free person, the number of dwellings and families, the value of real estate owned, birthplace, number of persons married within the year, number of paupers and convicts, mortality, and social statistics; the inquiries concerning population, agriculture, and manufactures were systematised, and a separate schedule was used for slaves. The census of 1850 marked the beginning of scientific census inquiry in the United States and in consequence the census of that year is known as the first modern census of that country. By an Act of 1902 the Census Office was made a permanent bureau of the Government. At the thirteenth census of the United States, taken on the 13th April, 1910, as at preceding censuses, a number of different schedules was used. The advance schedule of population was filled in prior to the date of the census by the head of the family; the schedule proper, filled in by the enumerator, contained inquiries as to name, relationship to head of family, sex, colour or race, age, conjugal condition,

number of years married, number of children born and living (referred to mothers only), birthplace (of each person and of his father and mother), date of immigration, naturalisation, language, occupation, whether out of work at date of census and number of weeks out of work during 1909, education, ownership of home, whether a survivor of the Union or Confederate, Army or Navy, and whether blind, deaf, or dumb. A special individual slip was provided for persons absent during census day. Special schedules were used for hotels, for families absent from their usual places of abode on census day, for agriculture (32 questions), for slaughterhouses, for Indians on reservations, and for domestic animals not on farms or ranges. The census of mines, quarries, petroleum, and natural gas comprised 38 different schedules, while 56 schedules were used for the census of manufactures.

(ii.) *Method of Enumeration.* The method of enumeration in the United States has invariably been that of entry of particulars by the canvassing enumerator after inquiries made either *viva voce* or by post, or by advance schedules. In 1850 the supervision of the census was committed to the newly created Department of the Interior. In 1880 a radical change was effected; up to this time the work of enumeration had been entrusted to the marshals, but by an Act passed in that year a new body of census officials, known as supervisors, was created. The supervisor's district was divided into enumeration districts, each of which was assigned to an enumerator or collector.

(iii.) *Tabulation.* At the first four censuses of the United States very little tabulation was required to be carried out, the returns of the marshals being transmitted direct to the printer. By 1870, however, the population of the country and the scope of the inquiry had extended to such a degree that it was found necessary to obtain mechanical assistance in the work of tabulation. At that time it became evident that a point would be reached before many decades had passed when complete tabulation within the census period would be actually impossible without mechanical assistance. At the census of 1870 and 1880, therefore, the Seaton tabulating machine was used. This machine was composed of parallel rollers, by which the blank tabulating columns were brought into close proximity so as to facilitate the work of the clerk. In 1890 the Hollerith electrical tabulating machine was adopted, and this machine was used also at the succeeding census of the United States, viz., in 1900. A brief description of the Hollerith (12) machine has already been given. At the census of 1900 also, automatic electric sorters (13) were first adopted, and their use was greatly extended in connection with the census of 1910. A brief description of these automatic sorters has also been given above. For the 1910 census a new mechanism was employed.

The total number of persons employed in the twelfth (1900) census of the United States was 59,373; the total number of schedules received was 7,296,925, and of cards punched was 215,893,174. The population enumerated was 76,085,794, and the total cost £2,439,000, or 7.69 pence per capita.

01 Some description of the systems of local government in force on the Continent of Europe is given in the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, No. 2 (1909). p. 978-80 <back>

02 See Chapter II, p.13, Statistician's Report, 1911 <back>

03 See Chapter II, p.15, Statistician's Report, 1911 <back>

04 See Review of the Statistics of Spain to 1857. F. Hendriks, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol. XXIII., p. 148 <back>

05 See Chapter I, Section 4, p.5 <back>

06 See Statistik des Deutschen Reichs, Band 150. Die Volkszählung, 1900, Erster Teil, pp. 1-2 <back>

07 See On the Vital Statistics of Sweden, from 1749 to 1855, by F. Hendriks. Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol. XXV., p.111 <back>

08 See Studies in Statistics, Longstaff, p. 193 <back>

09 See Statistique de la Belgique, Reoensellment General, 1900, p. iv <back>

10 See American Census-Taking, The Hon. W. R. Merriman, Director of Census, Department of Commerce and Labor, 1903, p. 7 <back>

11 See Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th Ed., Vol. XXIII., p. 818 <back>

12 See Chapter II, p.15, Statistician's Report, 1911

13 See Chapter II, p.16, Statistician's Report, 1911

This page last updated 14 March 2013

© Commonwealth of Australia

All data and other material produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) constitutes Commonwealth copyright administered by the ABS. The ABS reserves the right to set out the terms and conditions for the use of such material. Unless otherwise noted, all material on this website – except the ABS logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark – is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence